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prove especially valuable to historical investigators in a broader field. But as the author himself admits, arrangement and proportion are sometimes faulty. This is in part due to the nature of the materials that had to be dealt with. Yet it would seem that more success in these respects was attainable. The biographic and genealogical details in which the book abounds have, no doubt, their interest, but it is questionable whether so many names should have been introduced into a work intended, I take it, as a contribution to history. The general reader would have been thankful for a fuller account of pioneer life, and to that end would willingly have dispensed with the full text of some of the letters of reminiscences addressed to the author. As it is, the book lacks somewhat in unity and in literary finish.

In his introduction Mr. Anderson seems to strain matters somewhat to make out a strong case for the old vikings. This was not necessary. Nor can Leif Erikson properly be said to have contributed anything to America — unless it be the mooted question as to where he landed. Until we know to a certainty that Columbus profited by the Norse discovery, that discovery, while an important event in Norse history, will to America possess only an antiquarian interest.

ANDREW ESTREM.

*History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850.* By JAMES FORD RHODES. Vols. I.—III.; 1850–1862. (New York: Harper and Brothers. 1893–1895. Pp. 506, 541, 659.)

MR. RHODES has entered upon the task of writing the history of the United States from 1850 to 1885. The first two volumes of the work were published two years ago and were almost universally commended. Students of American history were delighted to find that one had begun this work who appreciated the dignity and difficulty of the undertaking, and who combined many of the qualities called for in a great historian; for the period presents many difficulties and calls for talent of a peculiar order. He who could piece together with patience and imagination the scattered bits that form the groundwork of mediæval history might well stand aghast before the tons of material that must needs be scanned before one can pass a final judgment upon the Rebellion and the era of reconstruction. Moreover, the years are yet new. No one, North or South, can read of Manassas or Shiloh without a tendency to a quicker pulse; and only supernatural genius will allow an American to write a purely objective history of that "mightiest struggle and most glorious victory as yet recorded in human annals." It is not too much to say that Mr. Rhodes has succeeded remarkably well in overcoming the two difficulties just mentioned. He has shown unusual skill in handling redundant or conflicting testimony; and he has shown himself a historian and not a partisan. In the first respect he has perhaps given a lesson to future writers of history. For the newspaper has become the great problem to the

historian. How can one sift the gold from the dross? Its kernels of truth are apt to be like Gratiano's reasons, "as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff; you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you find them they are not worth the search." Mr. Rhodes has successfully solved the problem. He does not delve in the chaff of thousands of papers or hold up to view treasure-trove from innumerable pamphlets. A newspaper, like any other witness, is forced to show its worth and standing before its words are taken seriously; moreover, he does not forget that reports and editorials are written by men, and he strives to get behind the printed page to the man that wrote the words. Greeley and Weed are to him thoughtful and influential persons, but they are not crowned deities because they control the utterances of big newspapers. It is not the transient newsmonger of Washington whom he trusts, but the accredited correspondent who has shown acumen, ability, and sense. Facts are not gleaned from the press when less sensational sources can be discovered; but references are continually made to newspapers and periodicals to show apparent public sentiment or the drift of public opinion. He has thus shown us how the history of our day can be written. To cut oneself loose from the daily press is to deny oneself access to the life of the people. But to cull from the irresponsible sensational sheet all the vivid imaginings of worthless reporters is to portray life as a fiery furnace, through which one can pass unscathed only when clothed in the garments of *Abed-nego*. By this sensible use of material Mr. Rhodes has given a picture of stirring events without making the reader feel that the world had left its orbit. For through all these momentous years men bought and sold, planted and reaped, married and were given in marriage.

In avoidance of partisanship and palpable advocacy, Mr. Rhodes has shown talent. The books are utterly free from vituperation or sectional spitefulness. There is a conscientious effort to be impartially scientific. Possibly the next century will see a fairer treatment, but we have no right to expect that in this generation a book will be written more free from passion and prejudice. Some may doubt if the historian is called upon to be as inflexible as the physical scientist. There has always been place for moral indignation in the affairs of men, and the great historian will probably always feel a touch of it, because without strong human feeling he cannot fully appreciate the impulses of which he writes. These books occasionally give evidence of such weakness—or strength—as strong sympathy or deep personal interest; but it is not the reviewer's duty to rebuke the author for such fault or to bid him be bloodless in all he writes. He certainly has not forgotten that the South was the victim of heredity and environment, and under the influence of climate and cotton. Science has helped him to leniency of judgment. Yet, dispassionate as the author is on the whole, he is not weak in his opinions or estimates of men. Buchanan, for example, is not maligned. He is not described by a single noxious epithet. But the utter incompetence of the

"old maid," as Polk rightly dubbed him, appears on every page simply from the calm recital of events and the plain picturing of the situation. It is extremely interesting to see how all the special pleading that had been done in Buchanan's behalf loses force and color in the light of unadorned facts.

The third volume, which has just issued from the press, will not disappoint the expectations raised by the earlier volumes. In independence of thought and in careful and adroit handling of perplexing events, this third volume is the best of all. The reader is at no time befogged. The intricacies of the winter of 1860-1861 are dealt with so skilfully that the knotted skein is all untangled. This result is due to two causes. The writer has firmly grasped the main facts and clearly stated them, unencumbered with philosophy and undimmed by moral reflections or argument; he has, moreover, written with utmost clearness. The style now and again becomes monotonous; it is never brilliant, but it is always simple, direct, effective. Occasionally there is a piece of strong description, — made stronger by the simplicity of the language. The scenes in Charleston when the Ordinance of Secession was adopted are given vividly and make a deep impression; and yet through it all the style is not turgid, but quiet, retiring, as if an awestruck spectator were in no mood for rhetorical flowers or fireworks. The author has found his greatest task in choosing illustrative material for his footnotes. It is well that he is not suffering from the reaction which seems to have set in against copious references and annotations. But beyond question he should have had a little more courage and stricken out quotations not really illustrative of the text, even though they are interesting in themselves. At times, to use an old figure, there is only a rivulet of text running through a meadow of notes.

Occasionally Mr. Rhodes seems to lack decision. The judicial spirit seems to have overpowered his judgment. He hesitates, for instance, to determine whether it were better for the North to fight, or once again to compromise in hopes of a peaceful issue from the irrepressible conflict. Perhaps it is not the historian's business to decide such questions, or to indulge in *ex post facto* prophecy; he soon finds that past events were hurried along by inevitable causes springing from innumerable sources, and that the task of prophesying from hypothetical conditions is a thankless one for the simple reason that such conditions were impossible. The author closes his eyes to the full force of the resolution which McLean of New York offered on the peace conference: "Whenever a party shall be beaten in an election for president or vice-president, such party may rebel and take up arms, and, unless the successful shall adopt as its own the principles of the defeated party, and consent to such amendments to the constitution as the latter party shall dictate, then, in such case, the Union shall be at an end." These resolutions contain the essence of the contest. There is no occasion now, even though we know the horror and anguish of civil war, to doubt that the North would have been craven had it yielded to such conditions. It would have destroyed

the very foundations of free government. There are times when it is necessary to fight, and Chandler was not far wrong when he said that without a little blood-letting "this Union will not . . . be worth a rush." Such indecision and hesitation as the author occasionally exhibits are, after all, not serious blemishes on his work. It is refreshing to find a writer making no assumption of infallibility. He is ever anxious to show the reader the grounds for his faith or doubt. He is willing to admit that in many matters of real history, when a historian is portraying the vicissitudes of a great people's life, the play of motive and the impulses of passion are difficult to detect, and he who would seek a nation's stops must approach his task without assurance or conceit.

In this third volume Mr. Rhodes discusses at some length the efforts at compromise in the winter of 1860-1861. He directs attention almost entirely to the Senate. The House committee of thirty-three is scarcely mentioned. The Peace Congress receives little more than passing notice. The words and conduct of Seward are examined with care, and the votes of the Senate committee are carefully analyzed. In other books we have had our eyes directed to the presumption of the South, to the folly of efforts to soothe away insolvable troubles, or to the weakness of the North, overcome with reactionary remorse. Mr. Rhodes has given us a different view. Possibly he does not estimate aright the inflexible purpose of the South to have all or nothing, and yet he seems to make it pretty clear that the failure of compromise measures was due to the stalwart Republicans, to those whom Chandler called "stiff-backed men." Seward, the most influential man of all, was at first hesitating, fearful. Had Seward, and he alone, taken his stand for the Crittenden compromise, the plan might have been adopted and the line 36° 30' run through to California. To Lincoln is due the fact that Seward held firm and came to see that a compromise, that yielded the principle for which his party had striven, could not be acquiesced in. But, spite of the acumen and insight with which Mr. Rhodes has examined this matter, he sees in one respect not quite clearly. His eyes are directed so assiduously to the metropolitan newspapers, to the fluctuations of opinion in mart and street of the great cities, that he seems to forget that behind all this was a mighty folk and that "the plain people" were not willing to surrender and call their action compromise. Lincoln's position was only one more illustration of the fact that he felt for and with the people about him. Even in the East, the young men, free from traditional conservatism and not yet tainted by commercial instinct, were far more apt to be uncompromising than the more prominent men who controlled the newspapers or stood at the head of great factories. It is clear that the West, not bound by cotton ties to the South, was unflinchingly devoted to the party to which it had given birth. Not Seward or Greeley or Weed, but Wade and Lincoln and Chandler, were the stiff-backed men of the crisis. A fuller study of Western sources would, it seems to me, have enabled the author to detect more surely the strong and conquering forces of the time.

Mr. Rhodes has given us neither a constitutional nor a military history. Constitutional questions have no attractions for him. He utterly refuses to assume the legalistic attitude. He does well not to entangle himself in senseless subtleties; but, after all, even the Rebellion took its rise in legal argument and its assumed justification in constitutional construction, and the conduct of the war involved many legal difficulties. These volumes would have been richer if the author had not avoided all legal problems in his endeavor to shun legalism. One wonders how he will succeed in dealing with the reconstruction period; for there law and fiction of law are the very Hamlet and Horatio of the whole drama. His account of military affairs, too, is somewhat meagre. Whatever he has to say is said lucidly and well. But there are certain indications of a distaste for military history. He has no zest for the game of war, and thus he loses sight of the broad and interesting strategic problems which make of war a huge game of chess. He lacks the geographic sense which enables a writer to see a military situation and to put it graphically, that sense which made Grant a general and his book a masterpiece. Without this power one cannot be a good military historian. It is well that the author has realized his limitations, for what he attempts to do he does well. He is writing a political and social history with rare judgment, accuracy, and patience, with good literary skill, and with sincerity and honesty of purpose. It bids fair to take its place among the very best works of American authors.

A. C. McLAUGHLIN.

*The Canadian Banking System, 1817-1890.* By ROELIFF MORTON BRECKENRIDGE, Ph.D., sometime Seligman Fellow in Economics, Columbia College. (New York: Published for the American Economic Association, by Macmillan and Co., 1895. Pp. 476.)

THIS octavo of 476 pages is accounted as the equivalent of three ordinary numbers of the publications of the American Economic Association, and is distributed to the members as Nos. 1, 2, and 3, of Vol. X. The importance of the subject, and the skill displayed in its treatment, fully justify the concession of so much space.

The United States banking system has maintained a deserved popularity for more than thirty years for a double reason. First, the system embodied the results of the best American banking experience; second, it has been operated under an environment of favoring conditions. But of late these circumstances have not been so favorable, and it is well understood in financial circles that the excellent principles of the national system must have a new application to changed conditions if it is to survive. The "Baltimore plan" of the Bankers' Association is an example of the various projects brought forward for its amendment.

Wise conservatism should always prevail in monetary legislation, and